

09/964,93901RE098/ALBRP220USAREMARKS

Claims 1-4, 6-9, 11-26, 28-35, 37, 39 and 40 are currently pending in the subject application and are presently under consideration. A version of the claims is at pages 2-9. Applicants' representative notes with appreciation the indication that claims 2-21, 24-33, 36, 38, 39, 41 and 42 would be allowable if recast in independent form to include all limitations of respective base claims and any intervening claims. To this end, claims 10, 27, 36, 38, 41 and 42 have been cancelled and limitations previously recited in these cancelled claims have been incorporated into their respective independent claims 1, 23, 35, 37 and 40. Moreover, features recited in claim 24 have been incorporated into independent claim 34. In addition, claim 5 stands cancelled and claims 2, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18-22, 24-26, 28-33 and 39 has been amended herein to correct a minor informalities. Favorable reconsideration of the subject patent application is respectfully requested in view of the comments and amendments herein.

I. Rejection of Claims 1, 22, 23, 34 and 35 Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claims 1, 22, 23, 34 and 35 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Braun (US 6,272,950). Applicants' representative respectfully requests that this rejection be withdrawn in view of the amendments to independent claims 1, 23, 34 and 35, which incorporate subject matter deemed allowable by the Examiner.

II. Rejection of Claims 1, 22, 23, 34 and 35 Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claims 1, 22, 23, 34 and 35 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Benedict (US 6,463,748). In view of the incorporation of allowable subject matter into independent claims 1, 23, 34 and 35, this rejection is now moot and should be withdrawn.

III. Rejection of Claims 37 and 40 Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claims 37 and 40 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Kaneda (US 6,592,192). In view of the amendments to independent claims 37 and 40, which incorporate subject matter deemed allowable by the Examiner, the subject claims are now believed to be in condition for allowance. Accordingly, this rejection should be withdrawn.

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CONCLUSION

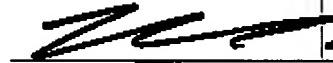
The present application is believed to be in condition for allowance in view of the above comments and amendments. A prompt action to such end is earnestly solicited.

In the event any fees are due in connection with this document, the Commissioner is authorized to charge those fees to Deposit Account No. 50-1063 [ALBRP220USA].

Should the Examiner believe a telephone interview would be helpful to expedite favorable prosecution, the Examiner is invited to contact applicants' undersigned representative at the telephone number below.

Respectfully submitted,

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